

Lesson Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Lesson ID: 92559-41274

Title: LIGHT ARMORED VEHICLE (LAV) PEOPLE MAGNET

Operation/Exercise Name: MARFOR PROMOTE LIBERTY Observed: 13 Jun 1990

Originator: COMMARFOR PANAMA

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5. (U) OBSERVATION:

The Light Armored Vehicle (LAV) attracts people like a magnet and is useful in opening conversation with individuals. Thus it aided in our intelligence collection.

6. (U) DISCUSSION:

We discovered something about the LAV or "tanquita" as the Panamanians called it. People are interested in them as they generally are interested in any large unusual piece of equipment. One technique we commonly used during several operations was to coordinate with the local Special Forces and police to allow us to park an LAV in a prominent place in town. Although initially standoffish, the children first and then older people would come by to look. Our Spanish speakers would go to work and soon barriers were broken down and kids would be lifted onto the tanquitas for pictures. Leaflets obtained from the Army Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) Detachment were also provided. The one showing Panamanian and United States (U.S.) flags side by side was a much sought after item. Usually these displays would lead to a feeling of confidence as the people came to look on Marines as friendly. Sometimes they would result in intelligence leads as people talked with the Spanish speaking Marines. This technique would not work well in an area overtly hostile to the U.S. presence in Panama or in areas close to the Canal where U.S. presence is common.

7. (U) LESSON LEARNED:

Peoples curiosity about U.S. equipment, such as a LAV can be used to good advantage.

8. (U) RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That intelligence and PSYOPS personnel take advantage of the peoples curiosity about U.S.

equipment to gain information and to conduct PSYOPS.

9. (U) COMMENTS:

In countries where armored vehicles have been
used to control the people the opposite effect can be expected.

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